OXFORDSHIRE BSIP:
SUMMARY OF THE BSIP PROGRAMME AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to provide a high-level summary of Oxfordshire County Council's plan for investing in buses, being funded through BSIP.

Background

In October 2021, the Council adopted its Bus Service Improvement Plan. This set out a programme of investment in capital infrastructure projects and the purchase of new vehicles, and funding for revenue support for new and expanded buses. This included funding that was bid for through the BSIP, the separate ZEBRA funding bid for zero emissions buses in Oxford (that was successful), Section 106 funding, and the Council's own resources. The total BSIP funding bid for was £53.424m.

In April 2022, the Council received a letter from the Department for Transport setting out its indicative allocation of BSIP funding to Oxfordshire and the conditions attached to the funding. This indicatively allocated £12.705m to Oxfordshire, about 24% of its total BSIP funding request. This funding has been allocated as so:

	Revenue	**Capital**
Indicative DfT allocation	£3,961,893	£8,743,028

In light of this funding settlement, the Council undertook a prioritisation exercise with Cabinet members and bus operators to identify a prioritised list of schemes to fund through BSIP. This included rescoping some projects to fit a revised funding allocation. This process also took account of the DfT's stated preferences for investing in bus priority infrastructure, revised and discounted fares, and new and innovative services.

Summary of the programme of EP-related works

BSIP Scheme Reference	Scheme Name	Source of funding	Funding Secured				Unconfirmed post-2024/25 ongoing costs (per year)
			2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total	
Capital Schemes							
C1	Traffic Filters, Oxford	BSIP		£3.4m		£3.4m	None
		Other (non-OCC capital)	£0.4m			£0.4m	
C2	Countywide Traffic Signal Upgrades	BSIP	£0.093m	£0.575m	£0.575m	£1.243m	None
C5	Cherwell Street Bus Lane, Banbury	BSIP		£1.3m	£1m	£2.3m	None
		Section 106	£0.05m	£0.45m		£0.5m	None
C12	Real time information	BSIP	£0.05m	£0.8m	£0.75m	£1.6m	No capital costs
		Other (non-OCC capital)	£0.15m			£0.15m	
R1	Rural bus project *Capital cost of purchase of vehicles to run the services*	BSIP	£0.2m			£0.2m	No capital costs
None	Bus Journey Time Reliability Fund	OCC	£1m	£1m	£1m	£3m	£1m
Revenue schemes							

BSIP Scheme Reference	Scheme Name	Source of funding	Funding Secured				Unconfirmed post-2024/25 ongoing costs (per year)
			2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total	
R1	New rural bus services *C. North Downs – linking to Didcot and Harwell Campus* *D. Cherwell Valley - linking to Bicester*	BSIP		£0.25m	£0.25m	£0.5m	£0.3m
R2	New Cross-border Services *Newbury-Harwell-Didcot/Oxford*[1] *Bicester-Brackley*	BSIP	£0.041m	£0.245m	£0.245m	£0.531m	£0.27m
		Other (non-OCC revenue)	£0.025m	£0.069m	£0.059m	£0.153m	
R3	SBSF Services retained	BSIP	£0.228m	£0.261m	£0.266m	£0.755m	£0.27m
R4	Youth Fares	BSIP	£0.305m	£0.611m	£0.611m	£1.527m	£0m[2]
R6	OCC Additional Staffing	BSIP	£0.161m	£0.161m	£0.161m	£0.483m	£0.161m
R9	Journey planning	BSIP	£0.025m	£0.075m		£0.1m	None
Totals (Capital and Revenue):			£2.728m	£9.197m	£4.917m	£16.872m	£2.001m

[1] To be part-funded by West Berkshire
[2] Assumed that commercial revenue risk will be borne by bus operators

Capital scheme summaries

Traffic Filters, Oxford

As part of the Oxford ZEBRA bid, a series of 'Traffic Filters' are proposed at strategic points across Oxford that are intended to restrict movement by general traffic except by buses and other permitted vehicles. These 'Traffic Filters' would be similar to the current successful Oxford City Centre bus gates, which constrain general traffic through the use of camera technology, backed by the appropriate enforcement legislation, signage and penalties for infringement. It is proposed that traffic filters will be installed on Thames Street, Hythe Bridge Street, St Clements, St Cross Road, and Hollow Way. Initial consultations took place in 2019/20, and further public consultation is planned for summer 2022.

Countywide Traffic Signals Upgrade

This will be a rolling programme of upgrades to the existing capability of traffic signals across Oxfordshire, which already have Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) capability. These upgrades will initially focus on upgrading signals on the premium bus routes in Oxford and the major towns in Oxfordshire. As the programme progresses, this will then be rolled to signal locations along the interurban premium bus route corridors.

The intention is, as a minimum, to insert modules can be inserted into each signal installation (junctions and the various types of pedestrian/cycle crossing), and these can then be configured to detect approaching buses through an interface with the AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location) component of Oxfordshire's Real Time Information system. The traffic light sequence at each signal installation can then be progressed more quickly to offer the oncoming bus a green light, or a green signal can be extended to allow an approaching bus to pass. Opportunities to develop a more enhance smart signal capability will also be investigated as part of this work.

Cherwell Street Bus Lane, Banbury

This scheme constitutes an extension of the existing bus lane on George Street from the current George Street / Cherwell Street Junction, to the Cherwell Street / Bridge Street junction, a distance of 155 metres. Combined with the existing bus lane on George Street, this will give a length of bus lane of 305 metres. The scheme is also likely require reconfiguration of traffic islands between George Street and Bridge Street. This scheme is part of a package of infrastructure in Banbury that will significantly improve local bus services in the town. The most notable is access improvements to Banbury Station along Tramway Road (£4.56 million), when combined with this scheme, will improve bus journey times from the town centre to the east of the town.

The provision of a section of bus lane and reconfigured traffic islands between the George Street and Bridge Street junctions, would save around 2 minutes (one sequence of the signals) for buses approaching the Town Centre on the following routes: B5, B9, S4, 488 (10 buses per hour) as well as on services operated by Johnsons and Community operators. A reconfiguration of the signals would also save around 2 minutes per bus for outbound journeys on the same routes, plus the B3 to Bodicote, the B9 to the Gateway Centre and the 500 to Brackley (so a total of 16 buses per hour) plus Johnsons and Community operators

Real time information

The proposal is to deliver a rolling programme of enhancements to the at-stop real time information and supporting software capability. This will consist of a mixture of signs and totem poles at 230 bus stops, with stops along the premium bus routes in Oxford and the major towns being prioritised, along with real time infrastructure at key hubs to be served by the new rural bus projects in the North Downs and Cherwell Valley.

Additionally, an upgrade to the 'Oxontime' system is proposed. This will provide a functionality that will tell users at the roadside when a bus is cancelled. Furthermore, any other network updates to be displayed, which would improve the customer experience. This data is already supplied by operators to the County server, but the system is not currently configured to display such essential information.

Capital and revenue scheme summaries

New rural bus projects

Two semi-flexible new bus routes would be created in the more rural parts of Oxfordshire that experience the highest levels of transport deprivation and poor accessibility in the county. Two new buses would be purchased by the Council, and initially these vehicles would be maintained and operated by the Council's in-house fleet service.

New North Downs service – linking to Didcot and Harwell Campus. This could link the rural villages of North Moreton, South Moreton, Aston Tirrold, East Hagbourne, West Hagbourne, Blewbury, Upton and Chilton. There will be integration with Premium interurban bus services in Didcot and Harwell, as well as train services at Didcot Parkway.

New Cherwell Valley service - linking to Kidlington/Oxford Parkway, serving Kirtlington, Bletchingdon and Hampton Poyle (and potentially Lower Heyford, Tackley, Steeple Aston and Weston-on-the-Green, dependent on final service design). There would be integration with premium interurban bus and rail services at Oxford Parkway for onward connections to Oxford city centre.

Revenue scheme summaries

Youth fares

Extending the existing City youth fare discount offer (currently offered by the Oxford Bus Company using their ID card scheme) and expanding it to all operators, meaning anyone aged under 19 years old has a £1 flat fare for travel within the city. This reduces inequalities, as young people without a card or who travel on other services currently pay half fare.

In addition, across Oxfordshire, we would extend the existing levels of young persons discount currently offered to those aged 16 and under (outside of the city) to those aged under 19, making thousands more people eligible for lower bus fares.

Newbury – Harwell – Didcot / Oxford service

This service would link West Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Historically there was an hourly Newbury to Oxford bus service along then A34, but in more recent times, this service was split into several sections and finally the Harwell Campus to Newbury section of route was lost. Between Newbury and Harwell, current public transport options require catching two trains and a bus. This scheme will initially seek to operate a new service between Newbury and Harwell. Subject to further funding and the commercial success of the route, options to extend the service to Didcot or Oxford will be explored.

This scheme would provide access to employment sites, especially at Harwell, in both directions, as well as providing an hourly all-purpose daytime bus service.

Bicester – Brackley service

New bus service 505 started around 2 years ago, funded by section 106 contributions in Brackley. The BSIP process offers an opportunity to restart this essential bus link and to tie it in with plans for a refreshed hourly bus service from Brackley to Northampton and with the existing s5 Bicester to Oxford bus service.

SBSF Projects

Thirteen Oxfordshire bus services were created, or amended, in September 2020, using £588,000 from the DfT's Supported Bus Services Fund. These services have now operated for the full year of the DfT scheme, and more funds have been found internally within OCC to extend their operation until March 2022.

This funding will see the continuation of the following services. Options are being explored to retain an additional 5 SBSF funded services through Section 106 funding.

46: Cowley Templar's Square to Wheatley ASDA via Horspath, Littleworth, Wheatley Village. Third party funding is being used to extend this service to Great Milton and Oxford city centre and improve the hours of operation.

63: Southmoor to Oxford via Longworth, Appleton, and Cumnor

Journey Planning

It is proposed to procure the services of a Journey Planning company to conduct research at Oxfordshire's leading employers. as a means of understanding the home-to-work travel patterns at these companies From this, a package of bespoke interventions will be designed by local bus companies, with the aim of increasing the proportion of people travelling by bus.

Additional OCC Resource

3 additional posts at OCC will be created to deliver the improvements contained in the BSIP and other priority public transport projects.

- Lead Officer (Infrastructure Delivery). Required to co-ordinate the delivery of infrastructure projects proposed in the BSIP. This requires specialist programme management skills.

- Lead Officer (Network Management). Required to co-ordinate and deliver improvements to Countywide Traffic Signals and Real Time Information Improvements. Both require specialist technical skills and knowledge of network management systems and processes.

- Lead Officer (Service Improvements). Required to co-ordinate the delivery of service improvements proposed in the BSIP, including co-ordination with bus operators, developers and neighbouring authorities. This requires specialist skills and domain knowledge.